

What makes a relationship healthy?

Healthy relationships are fun and make you feel good about yourself. You can have a healthy relationship with anyone in your life – family, friends and the people you date. Relationships take time, energy, and care to make them healthy.

Communication & sharing

The most important part of any healthy relationship between two people is communication: being able to share things about yourself and your feelings, and paying attention to what the other person shares. This can happen by talking, emailing or writing, and even using body language. Healthy communication allows you and the other person to feel comfortable with one another and figure out what you both like to do. You can also share your feelings with the other person and trust that he or she will be there to listen, support you, and keep personal information that you share private. In healthy relationships, people don't lie. Communication is based on honesty and trust.



How do I know that I have a healthy relationship with someone?

- You feel good about yourself when you are around that person.
- You think that there is an equal amount of give and take.
- You feel safe around the other person.
- You enjoy spending time with the other person, instead of feeling like you're pressured into spending time with him or her.
- You feel that you can trust him or her with your secrets.



Parent/Guardian relationships

Your relationship with your parents/guardians may be confusing right now. As you are growing and changing, you have more responsibilities and also more freedom to spend time with other people like friends or dating partners. While you may feel ready to make your own decisions about where and when you go places, your parents/guardians will put limits on you. The reason that they do this is because they care about you and want to protect you from danger.



How to disagree with your parents

Of course, some parents are better than others at helping you to communicate well. Parents can help by listening to and respecting a teen's point of view, even if it opposes their own. If your parents just don't seem to be on the same track as you, try these tips for disagreeing constructively:

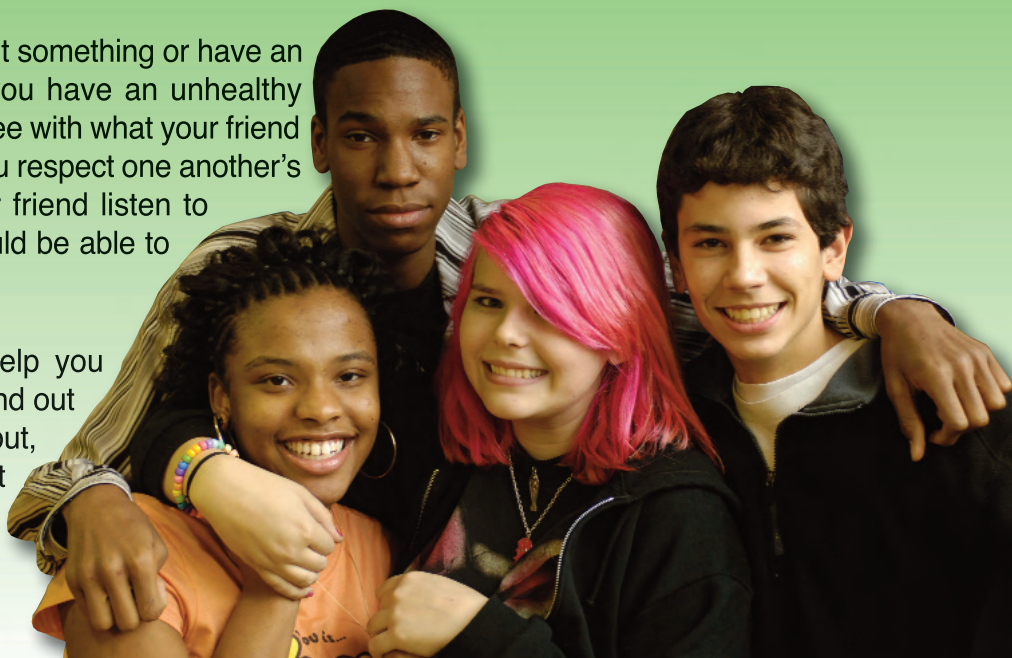
- Don't make it personal. If you get upset, try to remember you're mad at the idea or concept your parent or another adult is raising, not the person.
- Avoid putting down your parents' ideas and beliefs. Instead of saying, "That's a stu-pid idea," say, "I don't agree, and here's why."
- Use "I" statements to communicate how you feel, what you think, and what you want or need. Using "you" statements can sound argumentative. For example, telling your mom or dad, "You always remind me about my chores on Wednesdays when you know I have a lot of homework" has a very different tone from "I'm feeling pressured because I have a lot of homework tonight. Can I do those chores tomorrow?"
- Listen to the other point of view. Doing so makes it more likely that a parent or adult will listen to yours.

Friendships

Friendships can be confusing at this time in your life. You may be making new friends while you are trying to keep old friends. It can also be hard knowing what to do if you disagree with a friend. You can have a good friendship and still disagree sometimes, though.

Tips for handling a disagreement with a friend:

- In a healthy friendship, you should not be afraid of losing a friend because you say "no." Good friends should respect your right to say no about anything and not give you a hard time. It is important that you show your friend the same respect when they say no to you.
- If you and your friend disagree about something or have an argument, it does not mean that you have an unhealthy relationship. You will not always agree with what your friend has to say, but it is important that you respect one another's opinions. As long as you and your friend listen to what the other has to say, you should be able to work through a disagreement.
- The relationships you have will help you learn a lot about yourself. You will find out what things you like to do together but, more importantly, you will learn about the kind of friends you want to have and the kind of friend you want to be.



Peer pressure

One thing that can make any relationship hard is peer pressure. Peer pressure is when people try to pressure you to do something you usually wouldn't do, or stop doing something that you normally would do. There are many reasons people give in to peer pressure, such as worry about what friends will think, not knowing how to get out of a situation, and fear of being left out. Some friends may pressure you to do something because "everyone else does it," such as making fun of someone, using alcohol or drugs, or smoking. But saying "No, thanks" and "I don't want to" is the best thing you can do for yourself. One of the biggest challenges that you may have to face is standing up to a friend. Just remember that you are in charge of what you do and don't do. It can help to talk with your parents/caregivers about how to handle pressures that come up socially.

Bullying

Friendships are very important to young women, especially when it comes to having a group of people to hang out with. When it comes to the social scene, there can sometimes be competition and jealousy over friendships. When this happens, some people will leave others out of a circle of friends or even bully them in more open ways to feel better about themselves. Being left out of a group can really hurt someone's feelings, so remember how your actions can affect others. You would want others to include you and treat you nicely also!

Dating

Dating relationships can be a fun and exciting part of your life. They can also be confusing, especially if dating is new to you. Once you know that the person that you like also likes you, you may be unsure of what to do next. You can start by learning about what makes a dating relationship healthy and safe.

When do teens start dating?

First, there is no best age for teens to begin dating. Every person will be ready for a dating relationship at a different time. Different families may have certain rules about dating, too. When you decide to start a new dating relationship, it should be because you care about someone and not because you feel like you have to start dating. A dating relationship is a special chance to get to know someone, and share your thoughts and feelings with each other.

Healthy dating relationships should start with the same things that healthy friendships have: good communication, honesty, and respect. Dating relationships are a little different because they may include physical affection, like hugging, kissing, or holding hands. As you start to date, you may find yourself wanting to spend all of your time with this person, but it is important to spend time apart as well as together. This will allow you to have a healthy relationship with the person you are dating and with your friends and family at the same time.



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Most importantly, you should NEVER feel pressured to do something that you don't want to do. The other person should always respect your right to say no to anything that makes you feel uncomfortable. It is important that you are both clear with each other about what you will and will not do. By talking about how each of you feel about a lot of things, you may avoid getting pressured into making a decision on the spot about something very important.

Tips for having healthy and safe relationships:

- Get to know a person by talking on the phone or at school before you go out for the first time.
 - Go out with a group of friends to a public place the first few times you spend time together.
 - Plan fun activities like going to the movies, a picnic, the mall, or for a walk.
 - Be clear with the other person about what you feel comfortable doing and what time your parents/guardian want you to be home.
 - Tell at least one friend and your parents/guardians who you are going out with and where you are going. Be sure to also tell them how to reach you.
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Safety in Relationships

There are many signs that you could be in an abusive or unhealthy relationship. Take a look at this list of "warning signs" and see if any of these describe your friend or the person you are going out with:

- gets angry when you talk or hang out with other friends or people of the opposite sex
- bosses you around
- often gets in fights with other people or loses his or her temper
- pressures you to have sex or to do something sexual that you don't want to do
- uses drugs and alcohol, and tries to pressure you into doing the same thing
- swears at you or uses mean language
- blames you for his or her problems, or tells you that it is your fault that he or she hurt you
- insults or tries to embarrass you in front of other people
- has physically hurt you
- makes you feel scared of their reactions to things
- always wants to know where you are going and who you are with

These are just a few of the signs that you may be in an unhealthy or abusive relationship. Sometimes there are only one or two "warning signs" and sometimes there are many. If any of these signs are a part of your relationship, you should speak to a trusted adult such as a parent/guardian, teacher, doctor, nurse, or counselor right away!